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A MAGAZINE FOR THE GET-UP-AND-GO GENERATION

# TRAVELLER

JUNE 2016

## BUILDING THE PERFECT WAVE



WHY WE COULD  
ALL SOON  
BE SURFING  
ON DRY LAND

ALSO

TAKE THE PLUNGE WITH OUR GUIDE TO EUROPE'S FINEST LIDOS

THE BEST VENETIAN ISLANDS YOU'VE NEVER HEARD OF

EAT, SLEEP, RAVE, RETREAT – THE ULTIMATE IBIZA WEEKENDER

# We're making waves this month. And not just in the figurative sense...



Take a look at the front of this magazine you're holding and you'll see a rather fetching model of a crashing, miniature breaker that artist

Kyle Bean built from scratch for us. The reason, if you hadn't guessed, is because our June cover story is all about another group of people actually making waves.

Right now, the race is on to create man-made surf pools that are good enough to replicate the conditions of the ocean. A number of pioneering companies are claiming to have cracked the formula, with centres opening up across Europe this summer, and experts reckon it could be the beginning of a new – and massively popular – sport craze. We've got the lowdown on page 60.

Elsewhere, the watery theme continues, as we're in Venice for a spot

of island hopping (p48). Except for a brief trip to see the colourful glassware of Murano, few tourists venture beyond the old town, but the floating city's lesser-known spots are ripe for exploration right now, thanks to a wave of new developments, including fab boutique hotels and Michelin-starred restaurants. Just be sure to get in quick...

And, finally, to football. Fans may be aware that there's a small tournament taking place in France this month, but I bet you couldn't tell me much about the very first European Championships. It's not often that a nine-goal thriller of a semi-final can be overshadowed by events off the pitch, but that's what makes the 1960 Euros the most exciting footie event you've never heard of. Turn to page 70 to find out more and I'll see you next month.

**Simon Kurs**  
Editor



Artist Kyle Bean literally making waves for our cracking cover model

THIS MONTH,  
WE'RE TALKING  
ABOUT...



## DANCE-FLOOR HERO

Party season is under way in Ibiza and we're very much looking forward to Carl Craig's new Detroit Love night, every Thursday at Sankeys. Expect a serious techno love-in.



## GOING NUTS

Just when you thought you'd heard the last of the Cronut, Dominique Ansel, the French chef who began the craze in NYC, is opening in London later this summer. Queues are already forming in anticipation.



## ART ATTACK

It takes a lot to get Paris's art crowd talking, but François Pinault's announcement of a new space to show his €1.2bn collection of modern masters has done it.





# BUILD THE NEW



# DING

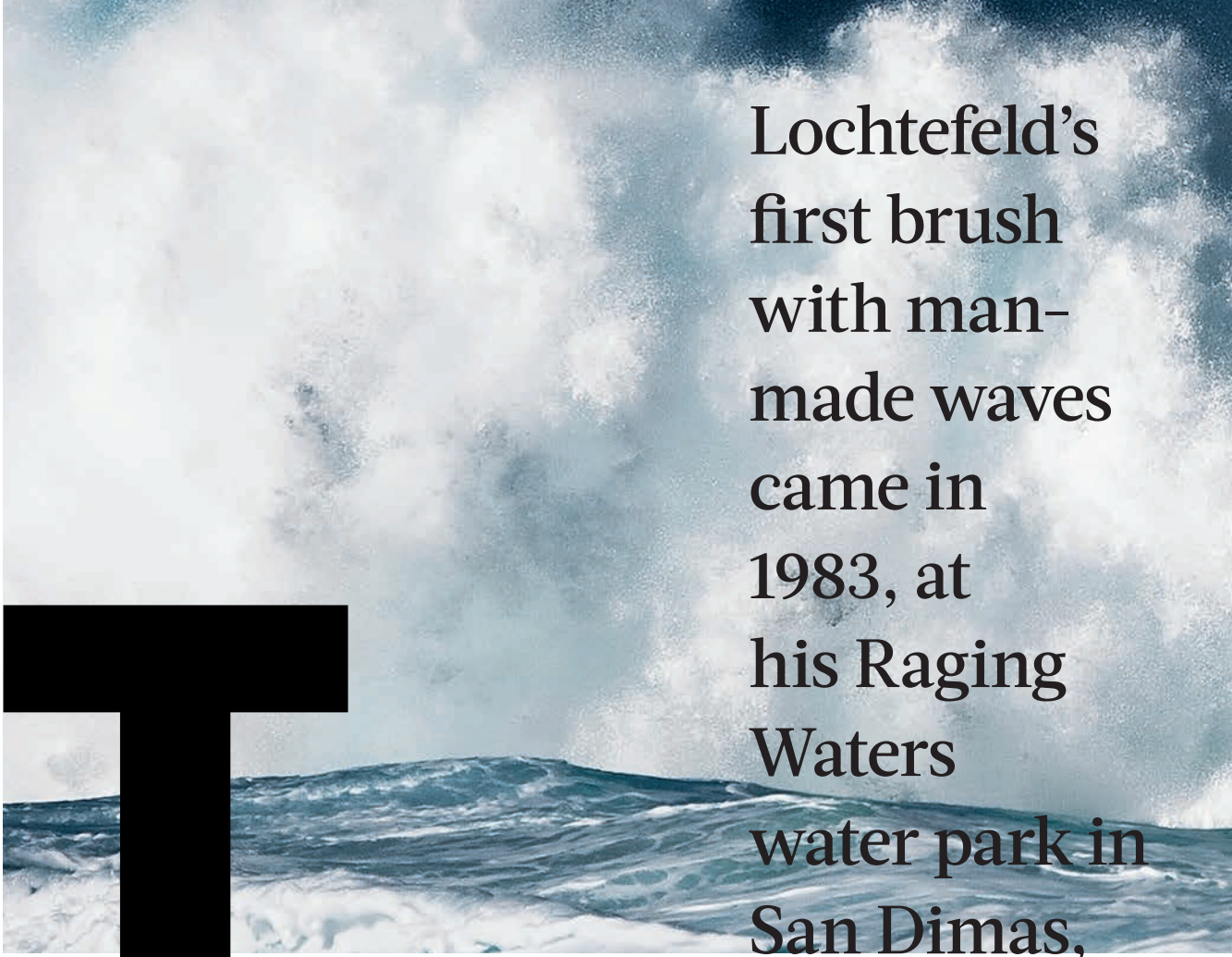
The race is on across Europe  
to create artificial surf pools that are  
as good as the real thing.

Not only will it change the sport forever,  
but it could mean the birth of a new  
adrenaline craze

Words by Toby Skinner

# WAVE





# Lochtefeld's first brush with man- made waves came in 1983, at his Raging Waters water park in San Dimas, Southern California

om Lochtefeld's perfect wave isn't Pipeline, Jaws or Cloudbreak. It's powered by computers and air pressure, and its first versions, set to open in Bristol and Rotterdam over the next year or so, won't be anywhere near a beach. But Lochtefeld, who has been surfing since the 1960s, insists his firm Wave Loch's technology is, "the real thing. It will be like surfing perfect ocean waves and it could change the sport forever, eventually taking surfing to the Olympics."

Lochtefeld is just one of a new breed of visionaries who see a future where surfers will ride artificial

waves in dedicated surf parks, not just in water-park wave pools. Players include Spanish company Wavegarden, Scotland-based Murphys Waves, the current market leader, and the Kelly Slater Wave Company, backed by the greatest competitive surfer of all time. The big question is whether their dream can be a viable business.

Artificial waves are, of course, nothing new and Europe has always led developments. King Ludwig of Bavaria, the famous builder of fantasy castles, used electricity to create ripples in a lake back in the 19th century. The first 'modern' wave pool was built in Budapest in 1927; another opened in Wembley, London, in 1934; but it wasn't till 1966 when the first surfable wave appeared at Tokyo's Summerland amusement park, inspired by the British model. But those waves were weak and required lightweight boards.

Prior to that he'd cut his teeth surfing the Big Rock break at La Jolla, north of San Diego and, after an early career at KPMG and then in real estate, he co-founded Raging Waters in 1981. It was one of the first modern water parks, with water slides and tubing rivers. In 1983, it took delivery of its first wave machine, one of only a handful in the country. "On the first day, I got my surfboard, all excited, thinking I could surf these waves," recalls Lochtefeld, "but it was total crap – you just couldn't. It soon became an obsession, despite repeated threats to my sanity."

Back in the 80s, the technology wasn't there to create a surfable deep





ocean wave, so Lochtefeld turned his attention to a 'sheet wave' that flowed over a stationary padded surface and could fit inside a space smaller than a tennis court. He sold his oceanfront house in La Jolla ("My wife wasn't thrilled") and, needing more funds, in 1987, sold his 25% stake in Raging Waters for \$2m (€1.75m). It took three years of development, much of it spent around a wave tank in the hydraulics lab at UC San Diego, and more than a hundred models, but by 1988 he filed for a patent for "a wave-forming generator", paying more than \$200,000 to patent lawyers. It was 1990 when, with barely any money left, Lochtefeld sold plans and licensing for his new FlowRider machine to the Schlitterbahn water park in Texas. The FlowRider blasts water up an incline made of a soft, trampoline-style mat, creating a simulacrum of a wave that can be ridden on either

**Clockwise from above**  
For decades, surf enthusiasts have been trying to replicate the perfect wave; Tom Lochtefeld, founder of the WaveLoch artificial wave-making company

a bodyboard or a short 'flowboard'. By 1993, Lochtefeld had sold a FlowBarrel, which produces a larger, curling wave that uses the same technology, but with a steeper incline, to a waterpark in Norway.

The FlowRider was an almost instant success with 90s board-sports legends, like surfer Kelly Slater and skateboarder Tony Hawk, working on board designs and new techniques.

Today, there are hundreds of FlowRiding machines around the world, including 12 on Royal Caribbean cruise ships. There are Wave House surf parks – with tiki bars, hammocks and food around the surf machines – from San Diego to Majorca. There's even an annual World Flowboarding Championship.

Lochtefeld admits that he probably should have left it at that. He'd created a new sport and a stable business that,







Australian pro surfer Dion Agius taking on the UAE's Wadi Adventure wave pool, featured in the short surfer film *Electric Blue Heaven*

with FlowRiders selling from \$450,000 (€390,000) to \$2m (€1.75m) each, had allowed him to buy back his old house in La Jolla. “A saner person would have quit, but the dream from the beginning had been to replicate the experience of real ocean waves. FlowRider was an analogue, not the real thing.”

In 1997, he patented his first design for a dedicated surfing wave pool and the surfpreneur has been working on it ever since at Wave Loch. And now the time is right, with Europe’s surfers set to benefit as a result “My wife isn’t thrilled – again,” he notes dryly. “Luckily, she’s very supportive of me.”

But Lochtefeld isn’t the only one chasing this dream. Last summer, Wavegarden, founded in Spain in 2005 by engineer Josema Odriozola and sports economist Karin Frisch, opened the much-hyped Surf Snowdonia in Wales and is planning


## MEET THE WAVE-MAKERS

### Nº 1 WAVEGARDEN

Founded in 2005 by engineer Josema Odriozola and sports economist Karin Frisch, Spain’s Wavegarden is the only company to have unveiled a surf-only destination: Wales’s Surf Snowdonia. The £12m (€15m) project had good early reviews, but has had mechanical problems and subsequent staff layoffs. Still, the company is planning a wave pool in Texas, opening this year.

another facility in Austin, Texas. Then, last December, a viral video was released of Kelly Slater, the greatest competitive surfer of all time, riding a beautiful, perfectly barreling wave in a top-secret location 110 miles inland. “There’s a lot of pressure when you’ve been working on something for 10 years,” he says in the video, referring to the Kelly Slater Wave Company, the team behind the prototype wave. After we see him surfing in the beautifully clean barrel and jumping from the lip of the wave, he declares his wave, “The best man-made wave ever made”. Other companies, such as American Wave Machines and Australia’s Webber Wave Pools, have also been working on new surf-pool technology, all of them claiming the best waves and specs.

The problem is, according to Lochtefeld, both the Wavegarden and Kelly Slater waves are doomed to fail.



“The way they work is essentially by pulling a huge mechanical plow through the water,” he says. “You can create a great wave, but there are two main fundamental problems: one is that you’ve got this hulking piece of machinery underwater that is liable to break down; the second is that you can only get a wave every two minutes.

Surf Snowdonia cost more than £12m (€15m) to build and received good reviews from surfers when it opened in August 2015, yet it has been beset by regular mechanical issues, closing early last summer and making eight full-time staff redundant.

Lochtefeld’s answer, with the SurfLoch SurfPool, is to use air pressure, meaning no moving machinery in the water. Instead, a pneumatic air system creates the wave energy and the shape of the pool floor turns that energy into a large primary wave. A smaller secondary wave then dissipates the energy without producing backwash. It’s due to be installed at Rotterdam’s RiFO10, a publicly funded surf park on a city-centre canal that’s being built this summer; and, next year, at The Wave, a surf and health park near Bristol. Both parks promise three grades of wave in one body of water (advanced surfers will paddle out to

#### MEET THE WAVE-MAKERS

##### № 2 MURPHYS WAVES

The current market leader in artificial waves, the Scottish company specialises in water-park wave pools that can double up as surf pools. Since the 1980s, they’ve overseen more than 200 projects, most notably surf pools at Tenerife’s Siam Park and the UAE’s Wadi Adventure. According to managing director Jim Stuart, dedicated surf pools can only be economic failures.

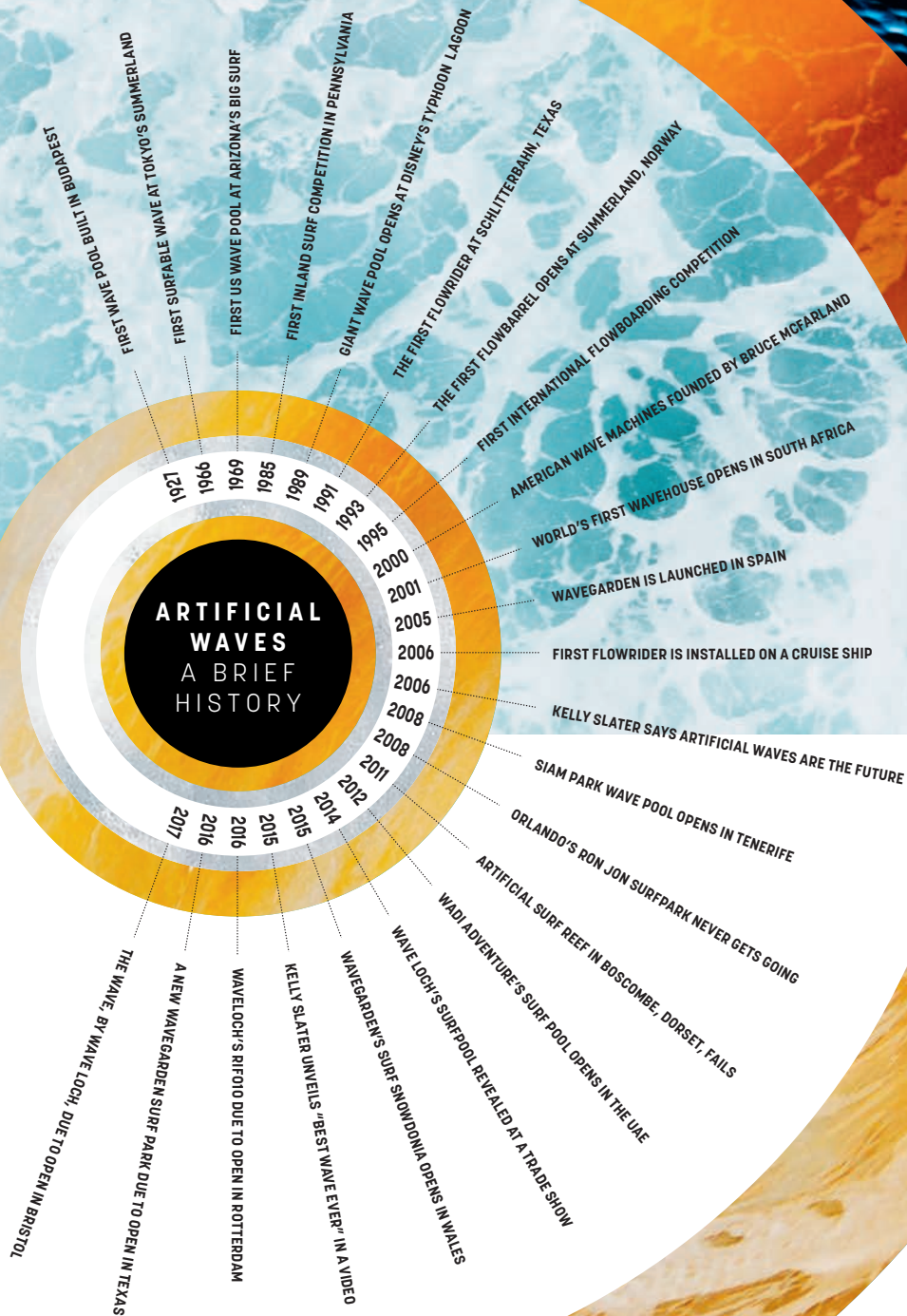
the largest waves at the back), with waves every 8-10 seconds.

“You’ll paddle out like in real waves, though you can potentially catch 20 waves an hour rather than a handful.” Though Lochtefeld admits it’s always a work in progress. “It’s like a puzzle that you have to keep approaching from 100 different perspectives whether that’s the materials or the computer chips for the air control.”

Not everyone is convinced, though. Scotland-based Murphys Waves is the current market leader, having made 500 regular wave pools and 14 surf pools over 22 years, with its surf pools in water parks such as Tenerife’s Siam Park and Wadi Adventure in the UAE. It differs from the likes of SurfLoch and Wavegarden in that it doesn’t see surf-only pools as its main business and in the technology it uses, which essentially allows tonnes of water to pour from a chamber over man-made reefs to create waves.



# ARTIFICIAL WAVES A BRIEF HISTORY



# THE

# NEW WAVES



Clockwise from left  
Murphys Waves,  
Siam Park, Tenerife;  
The Wavegarden,  
Wales; Surfloch Wave  
Barrel, South Africa

According to managing director Jim Stuart, theirs is the most effective technique. “We looked at using air in the 1990s. It sounded wonderful, but we took it to experts at Edinburgh University and they said, ‘It won’t work’. Scaled up, air becomes very unpredictable and if you get a vacuum it can be quite dangerous.”

Lochtefeld refutes this. “The technology wasn’t there in 1990, but 26 years on, with diligent testing and advances in computer science, it is now possible to create great waves safely and predictably using pneumatics.”

Either way, Stuart is unconvinced that a surf-only park can be an out-and-out success. “Even if the technology’s right, the business model is flawed. You’re not going to get enough surfers to have it booked up every hour of every day.”

As a model of failure on both scores, he points to the much-hyped Ron Jon Surfpark in Florida, which promised ground-breaking technology, but was a disaster when it opened in 2008. The Murphys model, he says, is epitomised by Siam Park in Tenerife, where the pool is a family wave pool by day and after the main park closes, is dialled up for the surfers. “We’re in the leisure industry rather than the surf industry,” says Stuart. “The people we deal with generally aren’t going for a pipe dream – they want a return on their investment.”

The dreamers, however, still believe in surf parks and not just in the idea, but in the business plan. Nick Hounsfield is a cofounder of The

Wave in Bristol, which will be built this summer to open next spring. A former osteopath who was concerned at how lifestyle choices affected his patients, he had a revelation when his father was dying of cancer. “He inspired me to do something big, bold and crazy, and as a surfer, this came to me.” The idea was a surf lake in a beautiful landscape, with gardens, swimming and a campsite, with yoga, triathlons, healthy food and education about marine conservation all part of the

package. “It was all about taking this new technology and making a positive impact – not just for it to spring up in theme parks.”

He went to Sir Tim Smit, the founder of England’s Eden Project, a collection of giant domed greenhouses in Cornwall, who told him, “It’s a ridiculous idea and you have to do it.”

The project has grown from a dream to a reality, with a succession of crowdfunding campaigns and grants covering the projected cost of around €8.25m. Having originally planned to use Wavegarden’s technology, last year, after “months of sleepless nights”, Hounsfield switched to Lochtefeld’s SurfPool tech. “We went to everyone,” says Hounsfield, “and Tom came to the top of the pile. He’s been doing this such a long time and he’s the real deal.”

These ventures might be another false dawn, but Lochtefeld believes it could be the start of something big: “Facilities like this could be like golf courses, bringing surfing to parts of the world that have never had waves before.” Surfing has been proposed as a new sport for the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo, with the idea that events will take place on artificial waves.

“It’s hugely exciting,” he says. “The Olympic officials want to see surfing is a truly global sport. Artificial pools could be the push that give millions more people the chance to ride waves and get that indescribable feeling, which is really what all this is about.”

## MEET THE WAVE-MAKERS

### № 3 SURFLOCH

The pioneering Californian Tom Lochtefeld invented the game-changing FlowRider static wave, unveiled in the early 1990s. Since 1997, he’s been working on surf pools that he claims will revolutionise surfing. The evidence will come this year, with Rotterdam’s city center RiF010 surf-wave pool, and next year with The Wave, a surf and wellbeing camp near Bristol, England.